8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Blackfoot camps. "When ten or twelve tents were together, we were sure to see six or seven women mutilated in this manner."[7] However, this severe punishment for infidelity was discontinued by the middle 1870's.[8]

Stormy as their marital lives sometimes were, Blackfoot Indians were fond and indulgent parents. Large families were common. Some men claimed to have fathered more than a score of children by their several wives. The pregnant woman wore a broad, adjustable rawhide belt as her time approached. It supported and protected her when she rode horseback or engaged in active work. Sometimes an expectant mother's labor pains came while she was riding with a moving camp. She dropped out of the line of march and two or three hours later returned to the caravan with her newborn babe in her arms. Usually, however, the birth took place in a tipi. An elderly woman, experienced in midwifery, gave the mother a decoction of roots to drink to ease her pains and facilitate delivery. While the mother grasped one of the lodge poles and an assistant held her around the waist the midwife attended to the delivery, then laced the mother in her rawhide belt. Sometimes the mother resumed her household chores the next day.

A portion of the baby's navel cord was cut, dried, and preserved in a beaded buckskin case as the child's primitive health insurance. The cases for boys' navel cords were in the form of snakes; girls' were lizard-shaped. The Blackfeet believed that snakes and lizards were never sick and lived long lives. The child was bathed and wrapped in soft skin. Moss or a soft punk served in lieu of diapers.

A few days after the birth the father called upon some distinguished member of his band to name the child. The name was carefully chosen because it was believed to have an important influence on the child's life. Sometimes it was the name of a respected ancestor; at other times it commemorated a brave or generous act of the bestower or of the child's father. Lazy

[7] *Travels*, II, 110, 117, 136.
[8] Bradley, "Manuscript," *MHSC*, Vol. IX, 271.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

RIDING AND GUIDING

MOUNTING

Contrary to European practice, most Blackfoot Indians mounted from the right side and saddled their horses from that side. Older men insisted this was the "natural" way for a right-handed man to mount a barebacked horse or a horse wearing a light, weak, Indian saddle. In mounting, a man relied heavily on the pressure gained by fixing a strong right-hand grip on the horse's mane. He placed his left hand on the center of the horse's back as he jumped on to help him throw his left leg over. Lazy Boy seemed to clinch the argument for the "naturalness" of right-hand mounting when he said that in the old days a left-handed man mounted from the left side because that was easier for him. The importance of a strong saddle, which would support a man's weight in the stirrup, as a factor in mounting is indicated by the fact that after the Blackfoot obtained "white men's saddles" in the early Reservation Period, they readily changed to left-side mounting. Today all Blackfoot mount from the left side.[87]

Blackfoot women always rode astride, as did women of other Plains and Plateau Indian tribes. A Blackfoot woman mounted by placing her right foot in the stirrup and thrusting her left leg through the center of the opening between the saddle horns. She did not attempt to swing her leg over the high cantle.[88] Women's skirts were made full to permit freedom of movement afoot as well as ease in mounting and to provide a covering for the legs when mounted astride. Three Calf said that in his youth pregnant women wore an undecorated belt of rawhide, 6 inches or more in width, as a support for the abdomen in riding. It was laced in front so that it could be

[87] Right-side mounting formerly was the general rule among Plains Indians. Parker (1856, p. 239) observed that tribes of the southern Plains mounted from that side. Yet Opler (1941, p. 396) claimed the Chiricahua Apache mounted from the left side. Perhaps this was due to their prolonged contacts with Spanish-Mexican settlements of the Southwest. Carlos Rincon Gallardo, Duque de Regia, an authority on Mexican equitation, has informed me through Dr. Pablo Martinez Del Rio, that Mexican riders of the Colonial Period mounted from the left as a general rule. In respect to mounting, the Plains Indians seem to have followed their own conception of the easiest method, rather than Spanish-Mexican example. It is noteworthy that the Choctaw of the Southeast, ante-1775, mounted from the right side, claiming it was the more natural one from which to get on a horse (Adair, 1775, p. 426).

[88] Parker's description of Southern Comanche women's method of mounting (observed by him in 1854), shows their method was identical to that of Blackfoot women. "Drawing the left foot up, after placing the right in the stirrup, they extended it over the saddle at right angles to the right, instead of describing the arc of a circle" (Parker, 1856, p. 208). In riding astride, Plains Indian women adopted a custom that was not Spanish-Mexican practice. Carlos Rincon Gallardo, Duque de Regia, has informed me that Mexican women of the Colonial Period never rode astride. Serrano's remarks on the riding posture of Mexican women of California during the Spanish Period also indicates their preference for the side saddle. "As the saddles on which they ride have the saddle-bow and stirrups taken off, they use as a stirrup for one foot a silk band, one end being made fast at the pommel, the other at the cantle" (Bancroft, 1888, p. 447).

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

let out as pregnancy advanced. This belt was worn for about a month after the birth of a child. Then it was thrown away, and the mother resumed wearing the narrower, decorated woman's belt.

HORSE COMMANDS

To start his horse the Blackfoot rider repeated the sound "sh" (made with the mouth open) several times. To slow down or stop the horse he called "ka" a number of times. Both commands were nonsense sounds, having no meaning except as horse commands. "Ka" was also the command given by men to keep their horses nearby and quiet after they dismounted in war or under other conditions when it was imperative for the horse to remain still. Women trained their best mares to stand still and submit to the bridle when their owners called "ka." Elderly men, who had stolen horses from the Cree, Crow, and Flathead in their youth, said those tribes did not use the same commands. They did not recall the commands used by those tribes, but remembered that horses stolen from them by Blackfoot warriors had to be taught to respond to Blackfoot verbal commands. They said the commands "sh" and "ka" were employed by the three Blackfoot tribes and the Gros Ventres.

Today all Blackfoot, whether or not they speak much English, employ the commands "whoa" and "giddap" to stop and start their horses. They began to make use of these commands shortly after they settled on reservations after the buffalo were gone. The old commands are remembered only by members of the oldest generation. According to one Blackfoot legend, Morning Star, who made the first horse, used the commands "sh" and "ka" to control its action. (See p. 296.) *

The Piegan employed one other verbal horse command. A man could get his horse to drink by making a rapid clicking noise (tongue against upper teeth and release) in imitation of a drinking horse. If the horse refused to drink, but moved his head from side to side in or over the water, the rider knew the water was not good for drinking and that he must find a better watering place.

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* I asked a number of middle-aged Flathead, Wind River Shoshoni, and Cree Indians who visited the Museum of the Plains Indian in the early 1940's, about the horse commands formerly employed by their tribes. They were unfamiliar with commands used before their people adopted "whoa" and "giddap." However, elderly Ogiala and Brule men recalled that members of their tribes formerly made a clicking sound (tongue against the roof of the mouth or front teeth and release) to start a horse, and the sound, "huh," repeated several times, to slow down or stop the animal. Kiowa informants claimed their people used the click and "huh" to start and stop horses in the old days. Undoubtedly Kiowa and Western Dakota use of the same nonsense sounds as horse commands was due to diffusion rather than independent invention. Perhaps if we had more complete information on the horse commands of the different Plains and Plateau Indian tribes these data would be of some significance in tracing routes of diffusion of the horse complex in this region. H. C. Bolton (1897, p. 80) found that the hiss sound "ss" was used in Mexico by half-breed Spaniards to start a horse, while Mexicans in the Southwest used the command "chock-a" to stop a horse. This suggests historic connection between Spanish and Blackfoot horse commands.

844 824 278 POPULUS TREMULOIDES

The bark was scraped and the scrapings brewed for women about to give birth.

"COCK-TAHN"

The infusion of the root was given to women in the preliminary stages of labor to speed the birth. The baby was bathed in the solution right after, which gave it additional strength to survive.

OSMORHIZA OCCIDENTALIS

A drench of the infused root was taken by women to induce labor.

SELAGINELLA DENSA

One old lady used the decoction of the plant to induce labor while others used the plant to expel the afterbirth.

PYROLA spp.

Women would drink the infusion of the leaves and root to expel afterbirth.

824 278 [743] [757] LYCOPODIUM JUNCEA

Pregnant women drank a decoction of "oot-squeeks-sos" (blue sticks) for symptoms resembling heartburn.

[847] PHYSARIA DIDYMOCARPA

Women would drink the infusion in small amounts to abort.

252 and full of manure. The thicker part has a kind of hard lining on the inside. My grandmother said that this part is good
262 for a pregnant mother to eat; she said it will make the baby
843 have a nice round head. Pregnant mothers were not allowed to eat any other parts of the intestines because their faces would become discolored.

825 The second stomach[B] has all kinds of Blackfoot names. Some call it the Many Folds, or the Indian Bible, or the Eaton's Catalogue. It lies at the beginning of the guts and is
252 made up of many leaves or pages. This has to be washed very thoroughly or it will not taste good. The old people often ate it raw, but certain parts were usually boiled or roasted, and the rest were dried.

The marrow guts are small guts that are streaked with fat. My grandmother usually just threw them on the coals to be roasted. They are not turned inside out. It is funny to watch them cook right on the coals, because they twist and turn from the heat until they are quite shriveled. A more recent way to cook them is to cut them in about six-inch pieces. These are breaded with flour, spiced with salt and pepper, and fried in a skillet. They turn into round rings and sure taste good that way.

Another delicacy is at the very end of the intestines—the last part of the colon. You wash this real good and tie one end shut. Then you stuff the piece with dried berries and a little water and you tie the other end shut. You boil this all day, until it is really tender, and you have a Blackfoot Pudding. You can cut it up for serving into three- or four-inch sections.

251 My grandmother could only cook up one or two of these intestinal recipes each time she got an animal, so she had to dry the rest of the guts. She washed them all thoroughly, and cut off the excess fat so that what was left just covered the guts evenly. Then she turned the guts inside out and washed them again until all traces of manure were gone. Then she

A [i.e., part of the cow intestine--Analyst]

B [i.e., of the cow--Analyst]

ABOUT BABIES AND CHILDREN

My grandmothers didn't usually learn about childbirth until they were ready to have their first children. I was raised this way, too, and it is one of the things about our customs that I have never understood. As a young girl I used to ask my mother about having children. Either she would ignore me or she would say: "When the time comes, you'll find out about it." She was raised the same way, and so was her mother. My girl friends and I sometimes traded gossip and rumors about the subject, but we never really knew much about it. Some of the things we heard were good, and some were horrifying.

I still often hear of the stereotyped Indian mother who has her child alone, out in some field, and then comes back home and continues her work as if nothing happened. If there were Indians who did this, they were sure not my grandmothers. As soon as my grandmothers of the past knew that they were pregnant, they slowed down their work and began a disciplined period during which they were forbidden to do many things.

If it was a first pregnancy then the mother-to-be was given advice by an older woman with more experience, often a sister-in-law or the mother-in-law. Some tribes had elaborate ceremonies for girls reaching puberty, but ours did not. Even today a lot of girls in our tribe are really in the dark about having children. With the modern lack of discipline, this has created many problems.

If the husband of a pregnant woman could afford a second wife, he often got one at this time, to help out with the household. Otherwise he might ask a younger sister to move in and help—either his own or his wife's sister. If he had a widowed mother or aunt, she might come and do the work instead. His wife's mother was not eligible to help, since she was not allowed to be in the company of her son-in-law.

20: Hungry Wolf I-4,5 (no date) 1980
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

This is what my mother learned about restrictions during pregnancy: 843 784

"When a woman first knows that she is pregnant she has to deprive herself of many things that she is used to doing. For instance, she is not allowed to eat certain foods, like heart and innards. The old people say that this will discolor the mother's face. If she eats leg muscles they say she will have cramps. If she eats brains, her child will have a snotty nose. And she cannot stand in the doorway of her home to look outside. If there is something she wants to see outside, she has to go all the way out and stand there, not in the doorway. If she didn't go all the way out she would have hard labor, they said. Those old Indians were very strict with their beliefs. Nowadays we would say they were superstitious. Back then it was just their way of life." 843 784 262 843 784

My grandmother, AnadaAki, told me this story of her first childbirth:

"When I first thought I was pregnant I just looked at the moon, and I started counting from there. I counted nine moons, and on the tenth moon I went into labor. Some women have a real hard time, and others find it easy. Myself, I went into labor at night. I kept on with it all the next day, that night, and on through the morning. It must have been near noon when my baby was born. We just had our Indian doctors around, and they made brews for us. One of these doctors was called that final morning. My husband gave him his pick of the horses, for payment. When he had picked out his horse he came right in and prayed for me and doctored me. After that I started to feel good and cheerful. 844 845

"Right after the baby was born and taken care of, my mother started to clean me. After I was cleaned she started massaging my bones back into place. I was given some broth to drink and then she laid me down to rest. That first baby died because in the excitement my mother cut the navel cord too short and air got into the baby's stomach and killed it. If